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NOTES ON ELIZABETHAN PLAYS.

‘WHILE THE GRASS IS GROWING.’

“‘WHILE the grass grows”—the proverb is something musty.’ *Hamlet*, 3, 2. 358.

For Hamlet’s half-quoted saw, Malone gives two parallels from the sixteenth century :

‘Whylst grasse doth growe, ofte sterues the seely steede.’
Whetstone, *Promos and Cassandra*, Pt. II, 1578, 5. 3.¹

‘To whom of old this prouerbe wel it serues,
While grasse dooth growe, the selly horse he sterues.’²
Paradise of Dainty Devises, 1578, no. 17.

An instance from the middle of the fifteenth century is pointed out by Dr. H. Logeman (*Le Moyen Age*, 4. 156) in the *Life of St. Katharine* by John Capgrave (1394–1464):

The grey hors whil gres groweth
May sterue for hunger, thus seyth the prouerbe.³

To these may be added ‘While the grasse growes the steede starves’ printed from Harl. MS. 2321 (sixteenth century), fol. 149, in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, 1. 208.

Much older, however, is the occurrence of the proverb in a letter, written to the council of the Count of Caserta by Count Simon of Chieti in 1243, when besieged in the Castle of St. Lorenzo, the citadel of Viterbo (‘Comes Simon obsessus in castro Viterbij, comitarijs comitis Casertani, pro subsidio suo’):

‘Excusatis autem uos, quod uicini aduentum principis

¹ [Nichols,] *Six Old Plays*, 1. 100.

² Collier’s reprint, p. 26. The poem is by Lord Vaux. See his *Poems*, p. 17 (ed. Grosart, *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies’ Library*, 4).

³ Hermann Knust, *Geschichte der Legenden der h. Katharina von Alexandrien und der h. Maria Aegyptiaca*, 1890, p. 105. The passage is bk. ii, ch. 3, vv 253–254, ed. Horstmann (E. E. T. S.), p. 94.

expectatis, ut nobis abundantius & tutius succurratis, uestris uiribus iunctis suis. Sed timemus ne illius uulgaris prouerbij locus adueniat, & utinam non supersit, Dum herba crescit equus moritur, & dum fugans canis mingit fugiēs lepus euasit.' (Printed in the *Epistolae* of Petrus de Vineis [Pietro dalle Vigne], lib. ii, cap. 53, Basel, 1566, p. 366, and by Huillard-Bréholles, *Hist. Diplomat. Friderici II*, 6. 128 f.¹

SIR CLYOMON AND SIR CLAMYDES.

Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes was ascribed to Peele by Dyce, on the strength of a manuscript note on the title-page of a copy of the 1599 edition. But this ascription cannot be right,² for nothing in the drama is at all like Peele. Mr. Bullen³ 'suspects that it was written by some such person as Richard Edwards (author of *Damon and Pythias*).' I venture to suggest Thomas Preston, the author of *Cambyzes*, as perhaps the writer of this absurd play. It is conceived throughout in 'King Cambyzes' vein.' The general resemblance in style and method is remarkable. The vice, Subtle Shift, is not only very similar to Ambidexter, the vice of the *Cambyzes*,—serving on both sides, like that worthy,—but he seems actually to claim kindred with him in the following speech (sc. 6, Bullen, 2. 131):

'Well, such shifting knaves as I am, the ambodexter must play,
And for commodity serve every man, whatsoever the world say.'⁴

Especially significant, however, is the following parallel, which shows such an identity of style between the two plays as almost to settle the question:

¹ Dated September, 1243, by Huillard-Bréholles, 6. 128.

² Though, curiously enough, Mr. Saintsbury accepts it without hesitation (*Hist. of Elizabethan Literature*, ch. iii, p. 71).

³ *Works of Peele*, i. xlii.

⁴ This parallel is noted by Fleay (*Biog. Chron. of the English Drama*, 2. 296), who, however, refers *Sir Clyomon* to 'R. B.', the author of *Appius and Virginia* and (in Fleay's opinion) of *Common Conditions*. 'R. B.' he supposes to be Richard Bower.

'Enter a Lord, a Lady, and a Waiting-maid.

Lord. Lady deer, to king a-kin, forthwith let us proceed
To trace abroad the beauty feelds, as erst we had decreed.
The blowing buds, whose savery sents our sence wil much delight;
The sweet smel of musk white-rose to please the appetite;
The chirping birds, whose pleasant tunes therein shal hear record,
That our great joy we shall it finde in feeld to walk abroad;
On lute and cittern there to play, a heavenly harmony:
Our eares shall heare, hart to content, our sports to beautify.

Lady. Unto your words, most comely lord, my-selfe submit doo I;
To trace with you in feeld so green I meane not to deny.

Heere trace up and downe playing.

Maid. And I, your waiting-maid, at hand with diligence will be,
For to fulfil with hart and hand, when you shal command me.'

Cambises, 861-72, Manly, Pre-Shakspearean Drama, 2. 196.

*'Enter Neronis, daughter to Patranus, King of the Strange Marshes, two
Lords, two Ladies.*

Nero. My lords,
Come, will it please you walk abroad to take the pleasant air,
According to our wonted use, in fields both fresh and fair?
My ladies here, I know right well, will not gainsay the same.

First Lord. Nor we, sure, for to pleasure you, Neronis, noble dame.

* * * * *

Nero. Well, will it please you forth to trace?
That, when we have of fragrant fields the dulcet fumes obtain'd,
We may unto the sea-side go, whereas are to be gain'd
More stranger sights among Neptune's waves in seeing ships to sail,
Which pass here by my father's shore with merry western gale.

First Lord. We shall your highness lead the way to fields erst
spoke before.

Nero. Do so, and, as we do return, we'll come hard by the shore.

* * * * *

Enter Neronis, two Lords, and two Ladies.

Nero. Come, fair dames, sith that we have in fragrant fields obtain'd
Of dulcet flowers the pleasant smell, and that these knights disdain'd
Not to bear us company, our walk more large to make,
Here by the sea of surging waves our home-return we'll take.
My lords, therefore, do keep your way.

First Lord. As it please your grace, we shall obey.'

Sir Clyomon, sc. viii, vv. 17-21, 27-33, 60-65.

Bullen's Peele, 2, 137, 138, 140.

SIR GYLES GOOSECAPPE.

The source of the plot of *Sir Gyles Goosecappe*¹ has, I believe, never been pointed out. It is sufficiently obvious, however, being the first three books of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Pandarus has become *Earl Monford* (*Momford*), a humorous nobleman. Troilus has become *Clarence*, a poor gentleman allied to Monford in the closest bonds of friendship. Criseyde is now *Eugenia*, a widow, the niece of Monford. Clarence wishes to marry Eugenia and Monford favors his suit. Not only is the correspondence of the stories unmistakable, but the dialogue of the play owes much to Chaucer. It is sufficiently curious to see the skill with which the anonymous playwright has adapted his original to the fashions of Elizabethan comedy conversation.

Act 1, sc. 4 (pp. 21-28) contains the confession of Clarence (in reply to protestations of long-standing friendship on the part of Monford) that he is in love with Monford's niece Eugenia. The narrative corresponds in general to *Troilus*, i, 547-1071, but it is much condensed and shows few, if any, verbal resemblances.

Act 2, sc. 1 (pp. 29 ff.) contains the visit of Monford to his niece's house. The agreement here is closer. One has but to read *Troilus*, 2. 78 ff. to recognize the source of the scene.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------|
| <i>Mom.</i> I, and I could tell you a | 'As ever thryve I,' quod this | |
| thing would make your Ladyship very | Pandarus, | |
| dancitive. | P. 32. 'Yet coude I telle a thing to doon | |
| | you pleye.' | |
| | 'Now uncle dere,' quod she, 'tel | |
| | it us | |
| | For goddes love.' | 2. 120-23. |

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Eug.</i> But I pray tell me my Lord | 'Ye, holy god !' quod she, 'what | |
| could you tell me of a thing would | thing is that?' | 2. 127. |
| make me dance say you? | P. 32. | |

¹ Bullen, *Old Plays*, 3. 1 ff. Bullen ascribes the play to Chapman, and so Fleay, *Athenaeum*, June 9, 1883, p. 731; *Biog. Chron. of the Eng. Drama*, 1. 58; 2. 323. The ascription is reasonable. It may be worth noting that Chapman uses 'Sir Giles Goosecap' as a synonym for a fool in *The Gentleman Usher*, 2. 1 (Pearson ed., 1. 273).

Mom. Well, farewell sweet Neece,
I must needs take my leave in earnest.
Eug. Lord blesse us, heres such a stir with your farewell.
Mom. I will see you againe within these two or three dayes a my word Neece.
Eug. Cods pretious, two or three dayes? why this Lord is in a marualous strange humor. Sit downe, sweet Vnkle; yfaith I have to talke with you about greate matters.

And with that word tho Pandarus,
as blyve,
He took his leve, and seyde, 'I wol go henne.'
'Nay, blame have I, myn uncle,' quod she, 'thenne.
'What eyleth yow to be thus wery sone,
And namelich of wommen? wol ye so?
Nay, sitteth down; by god, I have to done
With yow, to speke of wisdom er ye go.'

2. 208-14.

P. 32.

Mom. Let me see a passing prosperous fore-head of an exceeding happy distâce betwixt the eye browes; a cleere lightning eye; a temperate, and fresh bloud in both the cheekes: excellent markes, most excellent markes of good fortune.

Eug. Why, how now Vnkle did you never see me before?

Mom. Yes Neece; but the state of these things at this instant must be specially observed, and these outward signs being now in this cleere elevation, show your untroubled minde is in an excellent power, to preferre them to act forth then a little, deere Neece.

And loked on hir in a besy wyse,
And she was war that he byheld hir so,
And seyde, 'lord! so faste ye me avyse!
Sey ye me never er now? what sey ye, no?'
'Yes, yes,' quod he, 'and bet wole er I go;
But, by my trouthe, I thoughte now if ye
Be fortunat, for now men shal it see.'

2. 274-80.

Pp. 32-33.

Mom. Never trust me, if all things be not answerable to the prediction of a most Divine fortune towards her; now if she have the grace to apprehend it in the nicke; thers all.

• P. 33.

'Good aventure, O bele nece, have ye
Ful lightly founden, and ye conne it take;
And, for the love of god, and eek of me,
Cacche it anon; lest aventure slake.'

2. 288-91.

Mom. Neece, *Clarence, Clarence,* rather my soule then my friend Clarence, of too substantiall a worth, to have any figures cast about him (not-with standing, no other woman with Empires could stirre his affections) is

'Now, nece myn, the kinges dere sone,
The goode, wyse, worthy, fresshe, and free,
Which alwey for to do wel is his wone,

with your vertues most extreame in The noble Troilus, so loveth thee,
love; and without your requitall That, bot ye helpe, it wol his
dead. P. 33. bane be.' 2. 316-20.

Eug. Ay me poore Dame, O you 'This false world, allas! who may
amase me Vnkle. it leve?

Is this the wondrous fortune you What? is this al the Ioye and al
presage? the feste?

What man may miserable women Is this your reed, is this my
trust? P. 34. blisful cas?
Is this the verray mede of your
beheste?' 2. 420-3.

Mom. But now I see how you ac- 'I see ful wel that ye sette lyte
cept my motion: I perceive (how of us.' 2. 432.
upon true triall) you esteeme me.

P. 34.

In act iii, sc. 2 (pp. 51, 52), Clarence writes a letter at the suggestion of Monford (cf. *Troilus*, 2. 1002, 1023 ff.), which the latter undertakes (p. 54) to deliver to Eugenia.

In act iv (pp. 57 ff.) Monford delivers the letter:

Eug. What winde blowes you 'What maner windes gydeth yow now
hether, troe? P. 57. here?' 2. 1104.

Mom. Harke you, Madam, the He seyde hir thus, and out the
sweet gale of one *Clarences* breath, lettre plighte,
with this his paper sayle blowes me 'Lo, he that is al hooley youres
hether. P. 57. free
Him recomaundeth lowly to your
grace,
And sent to you this lettre here by
me.' 2. 1120-23.

Eug. Aye me, still in that humour? 'Scrit ne bille,
beshrewe my heart, if I take anie For love of god, that toucheth
Papers from him. P. 57. swich matere,
Ne bring me noon.' 2. 1130-32.

Mom. Kinde bosome doe thou take 'Refuse it nought,' quod he, and
it then. hente hir faste,

Eug. Nay then never trust me. And in her bosom the lettre doun

Mom. Let it fall then or cast it he thraste,
away, you were best, that every body And seyde hir, 'now cast it away
may discover your love suits, doe; anoon,
theres somebody neare, you note it. That folk may seen and gauren on
us tweye.'

P. 57.

Quod she, 'I can abyde til they
be goon.' 2. 1154-8.

There follows the account of Eugenia's writing a reply to Clarence's letter (pp. 58-61), which should be compared with *Troilus*, 2. 171 ff.

The pretended sickness of Troilus (*Troilus*, 2. 1513 ff., 3. 8 ff.) and the supper at Pandarus's house (*Troilus*, 2. 554 ff.) are combined in the fifth act, with some important modifications. A contract of marriage is made between Eugenia and Clarence, and the play closes with a 'measure' and a song.

THE CAPTIVES; OR, THE LOST RECOVERED.

Mr. Bullen, who published Heywood's *Captives*, from the Egerton MS. 1994, in his *Old Plays*, 4. 99 ff., remarks (p. 101) that 'he has not been able to discover the source of the very curious underplot.' This underplot is merely a version of the well-known Old French *fabliau* of *Le Prêtre qu'on porte*,² already represented in English by the *Mery Jest of Dan Hew of Leicestre* printed by Hazlitt, *Early Popular Poetry*, 3. 130 ff. Hazlitt did not know of *The Captives*. He has, however, noted as a parallel to *Dan Hew* 'The tale of Friar John and Friar Richard' in Heywood's *History of Women*, 1624. This story,³ which Heywood entitles *The Faire Ladie of Norwich*, is, I find, absolutely identical with the underplot of *The Captives*, and it shows many verbal agreements with the play.

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¹ Fleay, *Biog. Chron. of the English Drama*, I. 297, remarks: 'For the friars' part [of *The Captives*] compare *The Jew of Malta*,' referring, of course, to the Barnardine-Jacomo incident in Marlowe's fifth act (Dyce, I, 311-312).

² There are five distinct versions in Old French (Montaignon et Raynaud, *Recueil général*, 4. 89; 5. 123; 5. 136; 6. 105; 6. 243): see Bédier, *Les Fabliaux*, 2^e éd., pp. 339, 469.

³ Γυναικειον: or *Nine Bookes of Various History Concerninge Women*, 1624, lib. 5, pp. 253-6.